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ABSTRACT

A shrinking, interdependent world has placed an increasing premium on international competence, an area of national priority for the United States. Five steps are necessary for achieving a certain degree of international competence: (1) wide sectors of American leadership, in both private and public life, must recognize the existence and seriousness of the problem; (2) international competence must be viewed not as an isolated problem but as integral to every discipline, profession, and area of national life, central to the success of all Americans; (3) additional resources, particularly national, must be allocated to key programs for international competence; (4) better use must be made of the limited resources already available, including new ways of thinking and new relationships among business, education, and government; and (5) a realistic international outlook must be instilled in all sectors of American life. (MSE)

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WHAT WE DON'T KNOW CAN HURT US

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NOV 1983

I
FOREWORD

It is with a sense of urgency that the Commission on International Education of the American Council on Education calls your attention to "What We Don't Know Can Hurt Us." We Americans no longer have the luxury of time and distance to justify our lack of concerted attention to the serious and dangerous lag—a shortfall—in our international competence. By international competence we mean a substantial number of Americans in every walk of life who understand other peoples and societies well enough to be able to work effectively with them, using their own language on a broad range of economic, political, and security issues. Without this competence we shall not be able to cope effectively with our mutual concerns. This is an open call to action. In an intellectual and practical sense we must arm ourselves with these unwarlike weapons in order to hold our own in a small world. This call is addressed to the many diverse segments of our society—both individuals and organizations. Each has much to gain or to lose by our action or inaction.

The Commission hopes to generate discussion and action. We welcome comments and suggestions from our readers—as individuals and as representatives of organizations.

C. Peter Magrath

C. Peter Magrath
Chairman
Commission on
International Education

II

OVERVIEW

The security and prosperity of the United States have come to depend ever more directly on events outside our national control. A revolution in Iran, turmoil in the Horn of Africa, continued confrontation in the Middle East, spreading upheaval in Central America, uncertainty about missile decisions in Western Europe—to name but a few of many troublesome areas—have profound implications for our national security and our economy.

Our farmers, workers, and corporations are intimately involved with international activities generated by world trade. Political decisions taken in an extraordinary array of international relations can and do affect our environment, our use of the oceans, our transportation and communication systems, and how we trade with the rest of the world.

It is a truism to state that the world is shrinking, that it is becoming more closely intertwined economically, politically, and in security terms. More than at any other time in our history, what we do affects others and what others do affects us. Our scope for independent action in the world is limited. Short of an almost unthinkable international catastrophe—nuclear or economic—the trend toward the mutual dependence of nations is almost certain to continue and intensify.

Enhancing our ability to work effectively at the international level, therefore, is one of our most pressing national priorities. It has become an important key to ensuring our most vital economic and security interests. To deal effectively with the multiplicity of problems we face in this shrinking world requires an increasing *international competence*. To maintain and increase this competence means the education and preparation of an ever-increasing number of Americans who understand other peoples and societies well enough to be able to work effectively with them on a broad range of economic, political, and security issues. It calls for the education and training of many individuals who are able to speak other people's languages at a certain level of proficiency, and to understand the true nature of their histories, cultures, goals, aspirations, and their view of their most fundamental interests.

In spite of the urgency of the situation over the past decade or more, attention and resources devoted to refining this *international competence* have been declining rather than growing.

Our economic, political and security interests would be far better served were the following facts not true:

> "An increasing percentage of presidents of multinational corporations have had no international work experience or international studies while at the university," according to a 1977 report of the ACE Task Force on Business and International Education.

> Only about half of the people assuming foreign language positions in the Defense Department actually possess the necessary competence, according to Craig L. Wilson, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense.

In short: A shrinking, interdependent world has placed an ever-higher premium on sound levels of international competence. At the same time, the concern, attention, and resources that the United States devotes to ensuring itself such competence have declined. Inevitably, we are paying a price in a decreased ability to secure our most vital national interests. We will pay an even higher price in the years ahead if the need is allowed to continue to outstrip the resources we dedicate to meeting this need.

What, then, is to be done?

1. The most important step is for wide sectors of American leadership—in both public and private life—to recognize both the existence and seriousness of the problem. Nothing will be accomplished in the absence of such recognition.

2. International competence needs to be viewed not as a separate, isolated problem, but as integral to virtually every discipline, profession and area of national life, as central to the success of the American farmer and business person as it is to the diplomat and intelligence official.

3. Additional resources, particularly at the federal level, need to be allocated to key programs related to international competence. The resources required are miniscule in the context of our overall national budget. Yet, they are critical to maintaining and enlarging those programs that are essential to supplying us with the necessary skills.

4. Within the context of limited resources, more needs to be accomplished with the resources that are, and are likely to be, available. Innovation, new ways of thinking about and conducting programs designed to ensure adequate levels of international competence, new relationships among those involved from business, education and government—these should be of the highest priority.

5. Finally, for all those concerned and involved, there is a major job to do in helping to instill in all sectors of American life an international outlook consonant with the world as it actually exists today. For we have little if any hope of securing our interests if we as a people do not at least understand the context in which we seek to do so.

Each of the items outlined here—the growing importance of international competence, the scope of our shortfall in supplying ourselves with this competence, what needs to be done to overcome this shortfall—is discussed in more detail in the pages that follow.

III
THE PROBLEM

For most of its history, the United States has had the unusual fortune to be able to determine its own fate largely free of outside influences. Sheltered by two large oceans, populated by a dynamic mix of the world's cultures, blessed with a substantial land mass rich in natural resources, the United States was able for the better part of its first two hundred years to adhere to George Washington's stern admonition against "foreign entanglements."

Even in the wake of World War II, when it became apparent that the United States' relative isolation from the rest of the world was a thing of the past, we continued to have substantial freedom of action. The growing interdependence of the world, however, has steadily chipped away at this freedom. The coming of international jet transportation and satellite communications, the dissolution of colonial empires and the consequent birth of dozens of new nation-states, the phenomenally successful rebuilding of the shattered European and Japanese economies—these and other important developments have served to draw the nations of the world closer together. The result, as Secretary of State George P. Shultz said in China early in 1982, is that, "In this modern world, even the strongest and most independent nations cannot live in isolation."

Today, far more than at any time in our history, what we do affects others, and what others do affects us. In order to secure our interests, we must negotiate with rather than dictate to other nations. To get what we want, we must bargain, persuade, cajole—in short, draw upon all of the international knowledge, skills and competence at our disposal.

The need for Americans who are internationally competent falls broadly into two categories:

First, there is a need for a well-trained cadre of Americans who can perform specific area-, language- and internationally-related tasks within our society: diplomats for the State Department, intelligence analysts for the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, businessmen, lawyers, scientists and other professionals who can perform effectively in an increasingly worldwide market of products, knowledge and information, academics who can teach our young and counsel us generally on specific countries and areas of the world.

Second, there is a need for the American people as a whole to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the rest of the world. Enhanced international competence is essential if our society is to arrive at sound public policies. It has also become a central fact of day-to-day business and life for millions of Americans—for the farmer who depends for his livelihood on sales abroad, for the businessman whose success is determined by performance within a world economy, for the worker whose job may be saved or victimized by foreign trade.

Tragically, at a time when our need for well-honed skills at working effectively with other peoples has never been greater, public and private policies designed to meet this need are falling far short of the task. In real terms, fewer public and private dollars are being devoted to enhancing our international competence than was the case twenty years ago. Fewer people are receiving the kind of training and experiences that serve to enhance their skills in understanding other peoples and nations.

The purpose of the pages that follow is to explore in brief the major dimensions and seriousness of this problem, and to suggest what might be done about it. This is hardly the first attempt to do so. Over the past decade, a number of important individual and organizational voices have attempted to mobilize the nation toward an adequate appreciation of the problem.

Despite their telling analyses, however, previous efforts have not stimulated sufficient national awareness and concerted action of the sort that the need demands. We believe the problem is so central to our national prosperity and security that it demands renewed attention until it is addressed effectively. We echo and underline as even more valid today the sentiments expressed in 1979 by the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies:

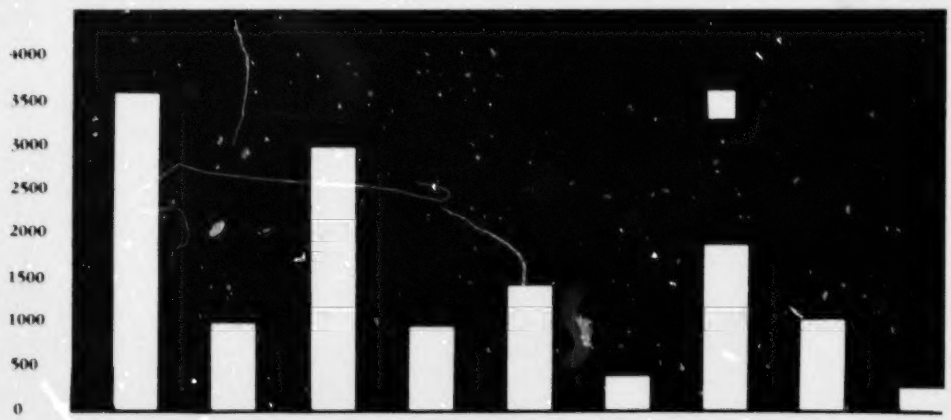
> **Nothing less is at issue than the nation's security. At a time when the resurgent forces of nationalism and of ethnic and linguistic consciousness so directly affect global realities, the United States requires far more reliable capacities to communicate with its allies, analyze the behavior of potential adversaries, and earn the trust and the sympathies of the uncommitted. Yet, there is a widening gap between these needs and the American competence to understand and deal successfully with other peoples in a world in flux.**

We also believe that the time may be ripe for positive action. Stimulated by the need to revitalize our competitive economic position in the world, increasing attention is being given to the need to improve our national systems of education and training. It is the confirmed view of the Commission that the strengthening of our international competence must be made an integral part of this concern.

The adequacy of our skills in working with others is not a narrow interest to be left to a small community of educators and language and area specialists. It should be of concern to a wide array of leaders in business, industry, labor, government, education, and the professions, to those whose day-to-day decisions largely determine how poorly we are equipped to secure our interests in today's world. Somehow, enhanced international competence must come to be viewed and treated as a central pillar of the success of our future economic performance, our long-term national security, and our international political relations.

Figure 1

COMPARING THE SUPPLY AND THE NEED FOR FOREIGN AREA EXPERTS



Source: "Counting Heads: Measuring the Language Gap and Other National Needs," *Humanities*, December, 1982

IV.

WHY INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCE IS IMPORTANT

Enhancing the level of our international competence has become important precisely because of the changed, increasingly interdependent nature of the world. The evidence is perhaps clearest on the economic front.

- Since 1960 the total value of U.S. foreign trade has grown from less than 10 percent to over 25 percent of our Gross National Product (GNP).
- Twenty percent of U.S. industrial output is for export.
- The jobs of one in six U.S. production workers are directly dependent on international trade.
- Forty percent of U.S. farmland produces for export.
- About a third of U.S. corporate profits are generated by international activities.
- U.S. commercial banks have $130 billion in loans outstanding to developing countries and the communist bloc, with 1,500 banks from throughout the country involved in lending to Latin America alone.

In short, the context in which the American economy operates has changed dramatically. Far more than at any previous time in our history, the economic decisions and actions of others are of central importance to our own national economic well-being. We depend more than ever on foreign markets for sustaining our sales, profits, and jobs. And we face increasing competition in our domestic market from growing numbers of foreign manufacturers.

The ACE Task Force on Business and International Education succinctly summarized the situation five years ago: "International business and its indirect effects have become a pervasive factor in the U.S. business scene. It is difficult to point to a firm of any size which is not involved in or affected by some aspect of international business."

In 1982, a report of The Conference Board, one of the best-known and most respected business-research organizations, concluded: "The hazard of parochialism is increased immeasurably in a competitive world of international dimensions."

What can be said of the economy is equally true of our international political relations. We deal today with 53 more countries than we did in 1960. We are involved in a range of international organizations and negotiations almost beyond count, each dealing with issues that have a substantial impact on our day-to-day lives—issues such as trade regulations and technology transfers, protection of the environment, the mining of the seabed, nuclear proliferation, immigration, and the international flow of data and information and communications. How well we secure our interests depends on how well we perform

in these countless dealings. And how well we perform is to a large extent determined by the level of our international competence.

International competence is as much in demand in our intelligence and military affairs as it is in our economic and political dealings. Currently, there are over 13,000 positions in the Department of Defense requiring foreign language capability.

In Congressional testimony, Retired Admiral Bobby R. Inman, one of the nation's most experienced and highly respected intelligence professionals, pointed up one of the real dangers "...Our nation's foreign language capability has been rapidly deteriorating. One of the most obvious results of this deterioration is the adverse impact it is having in the Intelligence Community."

Beyond straight intelligence, our far-flung military responsibilities require a high level of cultural sensitivity and international competence in order to be met effectively. The varied settings and circumstances of our armed forces around the world—from Western Europe to the Mediterranean rim, from the Horn of Africa to the South Pacific, from the jungles of Central America to the Korean peninsula—drive home the point.

International competence is important to us in another critical respect. The various means we use for enhancing our competence also serve to strengthen our ties with political, social, and economic leaders around the world. International educational exchange programs are one of the most effective ways to enhance our own knowledge and understanding of other nations, whether Americans are being sent abroad or foreigners are being brought to the United States. At the same time, such programs give current and future foreign leaders direct, and often their only, contact with U.S. values, institutions, and citizens. Former Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher wrote in the Spring 1982 issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "...In my own experience in diplomacy I recall many times being impressed by the depth of a foreign counterpart's grasp, if not necessarily acceptance, of the U.S. position, only to learn that he or she had participated in one of our exchange programs."

The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy stated in its 1982 report:

> Many ambassadors and other observers have expressed to members of this Commission their belief that the International Visitors Program provides American taxpayers with the best return on their dollar in the foreign policy field. Former IV grantees that have risen to national leadership include the late Anwar Sadat, Helmut Schmidt, Julius Nyerere, Indira Gandhi, and Margaret Thatcher.

Philip H. Abelson, editor of *Science*, wrote in the November 19, 1982, issue of the magazine:

> I have repeatedly encountered scientists who have spent a year or more in the United States. Their friendliness has been most heartwarming. These people have often been successful in science and, in addition, have reached important positions in their homelands. All too frequently, around the world the United States is lied about or criticized unfairly. Our scientist friends quietly help to limit the damage from such propaganda. They are some of the best ambassadors of goodwill for this country.

What Abelson says about scientists is equally true for exchange participants from a wide range of other fields. The same point can be made about the 330,000 foreign students who are educated each year on almost 2,500 American campuses. Not only do they acquire professional skills that are important to the development of their own countries, but while doing so, they obtain a first-hand familiarity with Americans, and with American social, economic and political institutions and values. Often, they establish professional and personal contacts with Americans that are maintained for a lifetime. Such familiarity does not guarantee that these foreign students will forever remain close friends and good business allies of the United States, but it does make the long-term possibilities for stable relations more likely.

V.

HOW THE UNITED STATES IS FALLING SHORT

While the importance of international competence to our economic well-being and national security has increased dramatically, the attention and resources devoted to enhancing this competence have been declining. Across the board—economically, politically, and militarily—we have been selling ourselves short.

ECONOMICS: On October 20, 1982, *The Wall Street Journal* published a story about the substantial number of Japanese companies who continue to send their junior executives to American business schools—despite the superior Japanese economic performance over the past decade. Atsushi Abe, one of the Japanese business students interviewed by the *Journal*, explained that his company wanted him to bring back from Stanford University not only an awareness of American management skills, but "contact with people who will be America's future managers," and in the process become "internationalized."

On January 18, 1983, *The Wall Street Journal* carried another story, this one about Charles J. Pilliod, Jr., the retiring president of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. The story pointed out that Goodyear "stands out as a rare example of an old-line smokestack company that has pulled ahead of its domestic rivals and is successfully meeting growing foreign competition." The story attributes this success to Goodyear's early movement into the production of radial tires. But, more importantly for our purposes, the story also says that it was Pilliod's unusual rise through the company's *international* ranks that "convinced him of the advantages of radials at a time when executives groomed in Goodyear's domestic operations weren't ready to accept them."

Unfortunately, Pilliod's experience has been far less typical of the American outlook than Abe's has been of the Japanese outlook. In 1979, for example, The President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies estimated that there were 10,000 Japanese business representatives in the United States who spoke English. The Commission also pointed out that there were less then one-tenth this number of American business representatives in Japan, only a handful of whom had working knowledge of Japanese. Japan's Prime Minister Nakasone reminded us of this fact when he visited Washington during the spring of 1983.

In 1977, the ACE Task Force on Business and International Education also pointed out that many managers with international responsibilities had had no international studies while at the university, and no management development programs with international content, to prepare them for such international responsibilities.

NATIONAL SECURITY: What has been true for business is equally true, and even more perilous, in the national security area. According to Craig L. Wilson, Special Assistant for Intelligence and Human Resources to the Secretary of Defense, "The American population no longer presents us with a large talent bank of bilingual and multi-lingual people on which to draw to meet current and future needs..." Only about half of the people assuming foreign language positions in the Defense Department "actually possess the necessary competence," Wilson told the Congress in July 1981.

In 1982, the Senate Armed Services Committee underlined the importance of international competence to our national security, and hinted at the inadequacy of current efforts to provide such competence, by calling for "an assessment of the degree to which the national defense requires a vigorous program for providing education and training in foreign languages and area studies."

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL RELATIONS: The same damaging shortfall is evident in our international political competence. Former Deputy Secretary of State Christopher pointed out in the article in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, referred to earlier, "We currently budget for our entire diplomatic establishment less than one percent of what we spend on defense."

The President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies emphasized in 1979 that, "The foreign affairs agencies of the U.S. government are deeply concerned that declining enrollments in our schools and colleges will lower the quality of new recruits for their services and increase language training costs..."

Just how badly we are falling short in underpinning our economic, political, and security interests with the competence they deserve is evident from our meager support for the key ingredients that go into such competence. Knowledge of foreign languages is one of the most important of these ingredients. Yet, as the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies stressed four years ago in an observation still largely valid today:

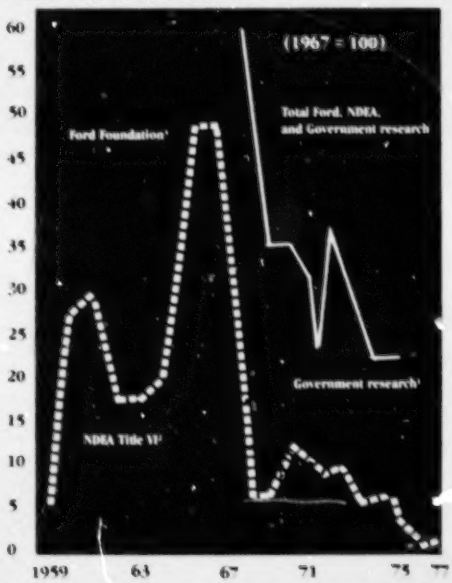
> Only 15 percent of American high school students now study a foreign language—down from 24 percent in 1965. Only one out of 20 public high school students studies French, German or Russian beyond the second year, with four years considered a minimum prerequisite for useable language competence. Only 8 percent of American colleges and universities now require a foreign language for admission, compared with 34 percent in 1966.

Nor are we doing any better in developing a seasoned cadre of Americans highly knowledgeable about other countries and areas of the world. During the 1960's, prodded by concern over the Soviets' 1957 launching of Sputnik, we made a substantial investment in the cultivation of such talent, largely through support provided by the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). We have since allowed much of that talent to wither on the vine. Again, the President's Commission pinpointed the problem in 1979:

> At the advanced training and research level, the nation's network of institutions and programs—area centers, programs on international problems, schools for advanced studies, libraries, overseas research facilities, and senior research exchange programs—suffer unremitting financial pressure. Some are in danger of imminent collapse.

Figure 2

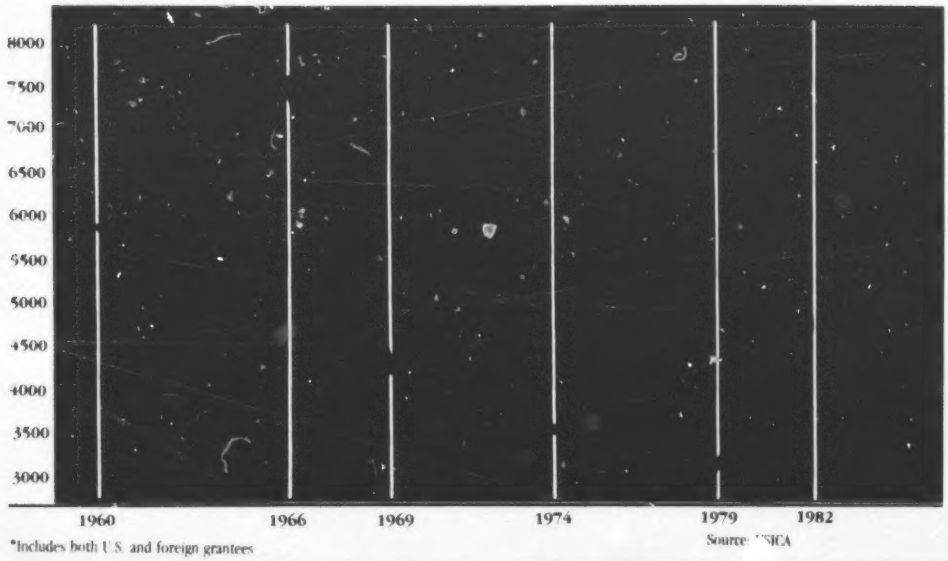
MAJOR FUNDING FOR INTERNATIONAL AND AREA STUDY CENTERS



[1]Includes funding from foundation type agencies (e.g., HEW, NEH, NSF, and Smithsonian) Source: FAR Horizons, Winter 1977
[2]Excludes fellowship funding Source: Office of Education
[3]Source: Sutton

Figure 3

FULBRIGHT* GRANTEES FOR SELECTED YEARS



*Includes both U.S. and foreign grantees

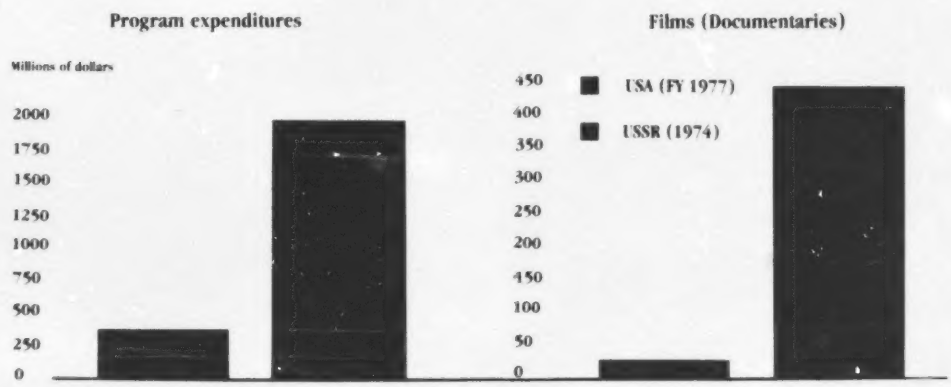
Source: USICA

The President's Commission went on to give some troubling illustrations:

- The Ford Foundation, which had provided about $27 million annually between 1960 and 1967 for advanced training and research in international affairs and foreign areas, had cut back to $3-4 million a year for such purposes.
- Federal support for area centers and the Fulbright exchange program had been cut in half by a decade of inflation.
- Federally financed foreign language and area fellowships had declined from a peak of 2,557 in 1969 to 828 in 1978.
- Federal expenditures for university-

Figure 4

USA v. USSR COMPARATIVE CULTURAL AND INFORMATION PROGRAM DATA



Source: "The Public Diplomacy of Other Countries: Implications for the United States," U.S. General Accounting Office, Washington, D.C. 1979

based research had been cut by almost 60 percent in constant dollars, from $20.3 million to $8.5 million.

Little has happened over the past four years to reverse these and other negative trends.

U.S. support for international exchange programs—a third major ingredient of enhanced competence—has suffered a decline every bit as devastating as support for language and area studies. Since 1946, the Fulbright program, our principal official exchange vehicle, has sent more than 45,000 American students, teachers, and scholars to foreign countries and brought over 85,000 foreigners to the United States. Many Fulbright participants have gone on to become key leaders of their respective societies, professions, and countries.

Yet:

- Federal support for the Fulbright program has dropped by some 40 percent since 1965.
- As a percentage of the national budget, France, Britain and West Germany each outspends the United States on official international communication, cultural, and educational exchange programs.
- The Soviet Union outspends the United States by more than four to one.

Some measure of the consequences is conveyed by the following, drawn from a May 1981 statement issued by the International Educational Exchange Liaison Group*:

> Cuban teachers and advisers continue to inundate selected Third World nations, yet in 1977 one-third fewer opportunities were granted to young Africans to pursue their studies in the United States than were available to them in 1968. We sent only seven doctoral candidates to Africa last year, three to Nigeria. In that year, only 1,800 Africans studied in the United States under U.S. sponsorship. The Soviet figure was 24,000. In Latin America, the U.S.S.R. offered 4,650 study and training exchanges in 1978 while the United States Government offered far fewer than one-tenth that number in a hemisphere so close, so troubled, and so important to our socio-economic goals and strategic thinking.

On a related front, we have yet to deal in any serious, coordinated way with the role of the substantial number of foreign students studying in this country. Foreign students on American campuses are a ready resource for sharing with us knowledge of

*An inter-associational coalition of chief executive officers of major U.S. exchange organizations.

Figure 5

COMPARATIVE COMMITMENT OF ALLIES TO U.S. IN FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL/CULTURAL EXCHANGE

	U.S. (FY 1977)	France (1977)	GFR (1977)	U.K. (1976-77)	Japan (1976-77)
Exchange expenditures as percent of budget	0.1%	0.79%	0.6%	0.18%	0.21%
Language teaching personnel	15	24,052	1771	503	29
Publications (books)	212,046	1,242,000	480,000	235,000	23,720
Feature films	0	64	9	136	28

Source: "The Public Diplomacy of Other Countries: Implications for the United States," U.S. General Accounting Office, Washington, D.C. 1979.

their own languages and cultures. While here, they acquire specific knowledge and skills that will be important to the subsequent development of their own countries, and thereby to the peace and stability of the world. They gain a valuable insight into our values and institutions and forge personal and professional ties that can serve them and us well for decades to come. Eighty-five percent of these students support themselves, and they add many millions of dollars a year to local economies throughout the United States. However, we do little in an organized fashion to take advantage of this valuable resource that is right here at hand. As the ACE Committee on Foreign Students and Institutional Policy pointed out in a 1982 report: "...Foreign students are all to often an unrealized, underutilized, and unintegrated resource for relieving the startling lack of knowledge among domestic students about international matters."

Finally, the current shortfall in the level of our international competence is revealed by the lack of broad public knowledge of the simple facts of today's world. With the growth of instant, worldwide communications, and the pervasive role of television in our daily lives, it would be natural to expect that American knowledge of the world would be extensive and reasonably accurate. Public opinion surveys have consistently shown otherwise.

In 1981 polls:

- A mere one in four Americans could give the location of El Salvador correctly, despite its constant presence in our daily news diet.
- Fewer than four in ten Americans could name the two countries involved in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), which had been going on for a number of years and were paramount among the various efforts to head off a nuclear catastrophe.
- Less than half of the Americans surveyed knew that the United States—rather than the Soviet Union—was a member of NATO.

Nor do we seem to be preparing the next generation of Americans any better. Based on the results of a 1980 survey of the international knowledge and attitudes of 3,000 undergraduates at 185 colleges and universities, the Council on Learning concluded:

> There is... sufficient evidence to suggest that this nation is still poorly equipped in terms of its ability to deal with its innumerable global obligations with inadequate public understanding in place. The three thousand college students tested here will be America's leaders at the entry of the twenty-first century. One wonders whether we shall learn our lessons in time that the education of our citizenry must keep apace of the changing circumstances of national existence.

Other voices have been heard from in recent months. The National Commission on Excellence in Education, in a report which has excited considerable discussion, points out in unequivocal terms:

> Our nation is in crisis. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitiors throughout the world.... The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people.

In sum, whatever the particular measure of our performance—whether foreign language instruction, study of other countries and areas of the world, opportunities for direct contact with other peoples and societies, tapping the resource of foreign students, simple awareness of the facts of the world—the shortfall is substantial and threatening. Social analyst John Naisbitt pinpointed the situation vividly when he noted that, "We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge." And it is knowledge about the world that our economic, political and national security interests demand.

VI.
A CALL TO ACTION

AWARENESS. The first and most immediate challenge to those concerned about the state of our international competence is to enhance awareness about the nature and seriousness of this problem. The focus should be on convincing both the American people at large and specific, influential interest groups who are in a position to do something about the problem that our shortfall is real, serious, and threatening to our economic well-being and national security.

When the Soviets launched the first earth-orbiting satellite in 1957, Americans from all walks of life understood immediately the challenge this posed to American leadership in the world. The result was meaningful action on a national agenda for meeting the challenge. In sharp contrast, when OPEC embargoed oil shipments to the United States in the winter of 1973-74, and subsequently raised the price of oil many times over, the American response was delayed and halting. The American public refused for a number of years to believe that the problem was either serious or real. As a result, Americans failed to unite behind an effective response to the threat.

If we are to have any hope of mounting an effort that will provide America with the competence its interests require in today's world, the American public at large, together with influential elements of American leadership, must become convinced of both the reality and the seriousness of the problem.

INTEGRATION. Concern about international competence must be integrated with the growing and broader concern about whether our basic systems of education and training are adequate to the high-technology-based world economy of the future. The latter concern grows mainly out of the decline in our economic competitiveness over the past decade, and our growing shortages of qualified scientists, engineers, and mathematicians. It is a powerful concern, likely to produce at least some effective action. It engages influential business interests as well as key

public officials. The Commission believes that the concern is well founded, meriting effective and sustained action. The Commission also believes it would be a serious mistake not to include in this concern attention to ensuring that our technological specialists of the future also have the international outlook and skills the world economy will demand for success.

Integration is important in another critical sense. For the most part, in the past, the major components of international competence have always been viewed largely as self-contained disciplines. Foreign languages and international and area studies have traditionally not been seen as having much to do with engineering or science or law or medicine or business. The shrinking nature of the world has changed that. Certainly, our national interests continue to have an important and growing need for foreign language, area, and international specialists. That need should not be underestimated or shortchanged. But our national interests now require, in addition, business people and professionals, farmers, workers, and citizens not only well trained in their particular skills but also equipped to perform effectively in an interdependent world.

FUNDING. Additional resources need to be made available to key programs relating to our international competence. The shortfall is simply too great, the issue too central to our well-being and security, not to provide at least the minimum resources required.

The financial challenge exists on all fronts. Individual businesses, foundations, educational institutions, governors and state legislators, mayors and city council members—these and others with a direct stake in the outcome should do all that they can to carve out the maximum possible financial support for efforts to enhance our international competence.

The federal government has perhaps the most critical role of all—not, however, because it supplies the bulk of the resources. The federal portion of international exchange programs, to give but one example, is less than five percent of the total funding for such programs. By far the largest part of this funding must continue to come from a combination of businesses, foundations, individuals, state and local governments, educational institutions, and others involved and concerned.

Yet, the federal role is primary, both because it serves as an essential catalyst for the decisions and actions of others, and because the federal government holds the ultimate responsibility for the nation's security and well-being. In the final analysis, it is the federal government that must guarantee that it has the talent required to ensure our most vital national interests—adequately skilled and knowledgeable diplomats, intelligence analysts, military personnel, trade negotiators, the full range of human resources that our interests command.

INNOVATION. The economic problems that have plagued our society with increasing intensity over the past decade are unlikely to ease significantly in the foreseeable future. Pulling out of the steepest recession in fifty years, making the difficult

transition from the smokestack-based economy of the past to the high-technology-based economy of the future, the continuing challenge not only from Japan and other advanced industrial nations but also from the newly burgeoning economies of Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and others, the precarious state of the heavily debt-ridden countries such as Mexico, Poland and Brazil—these and other factors are certain to ensure that we will not return soon or smoothly to the comparatively easy abundance of the 1950's and 1960's.

In contrast to these earlier decades, there will be relatively little new money around—even if the funding increases recommended are approved. The resources that are available will be fiercely sought after. Local, state, and national governments, educational institutions at all levels, foundations and other nonprofit enterprises, business, industry, and labor—all will continue to face intense financial pressures.

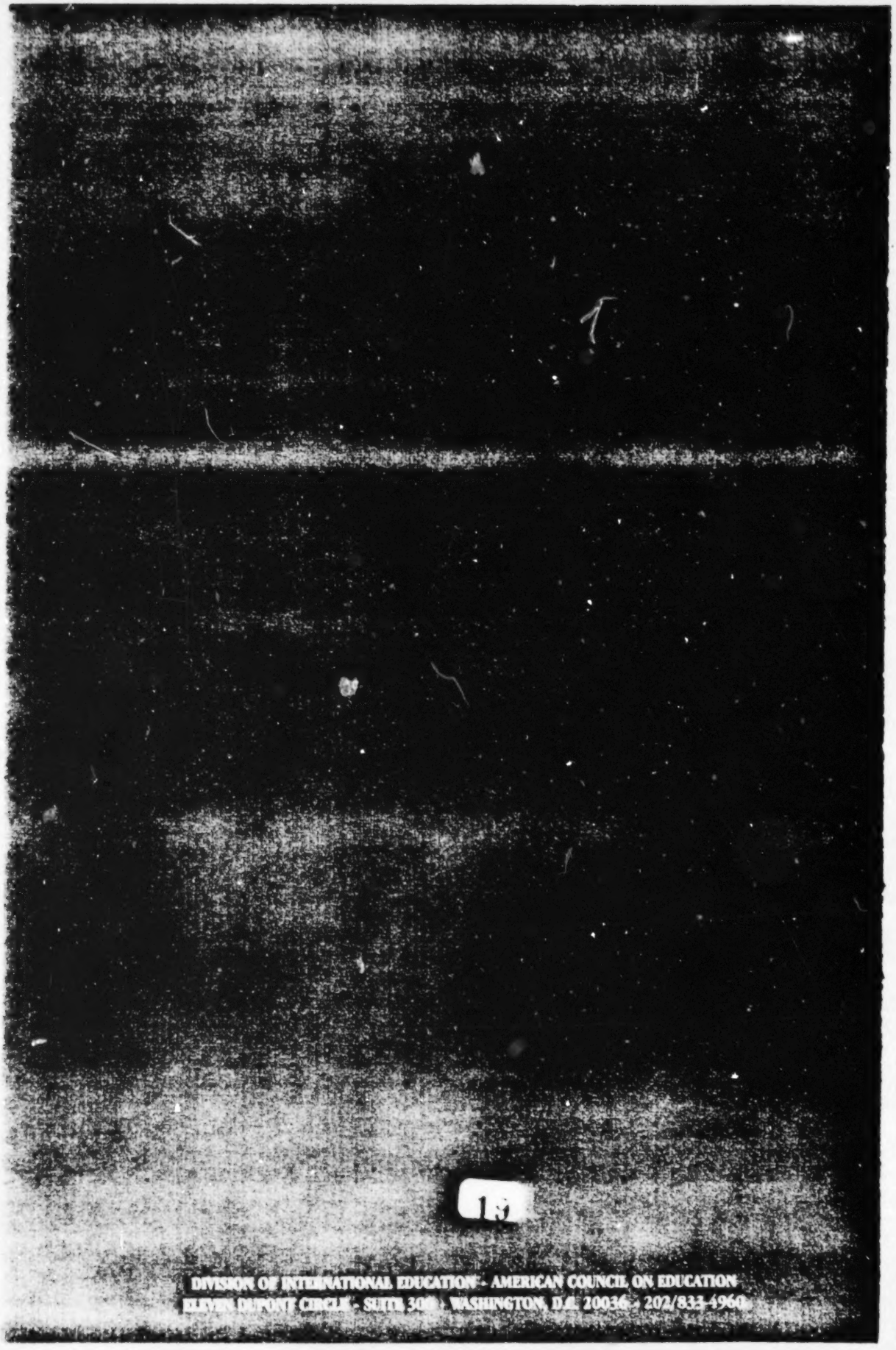
It is precisely within these difficult economic circumstances that innovation in thought, action, and program development is at a premium. If we are to succeed in our efforts to reverse the downward trend in the level of our international competence, we must find new, imaginative ways of doing so without relying on vast new levels of funding.

OUTLOOK. Finally, those concerned about our international competence must work to ensure that our society at large, as well as specific institutions within the society, develop and maintain an outlook appropriate to the interdependent world that is upon us. One disturbing trend in particular needs to be addressed.

With the economic, political and military difficulties of the past decade has come a resurgence of isolationist, go-it-alone sentiment. This sentiment has been fueled by such divergent occurrences as lost sales, profits, and jobs resulting from stiff foreign economic competition, a frustrating, year-long inability to liberate American hostages in Iran, and Soviet actions in various parts of the world.

These and other challenges to our interests are both real and pressing. A resort to "fortress America," however, is perhaps the most self-destructive path in trying to meet them. It will serve to damage our overall interests far more than it will help to secure them. More promisng is an acceptance of the interdependent nature of the world in which we live, and a determination to equip ourselves with the competence required to work effectively within the context of that world.

In each of the areas discussed above—awareness, integration, innovation, funding, and outlook—each American has a role to play. The ACE Commission on International Education encourages wide discussion of the importance of developing international competence by the boards, committees, and organizations to which you belong. Each of us, business executives, teachers, farmers, lawyers, members of Congress, governors, mayors, union officials, bears a responsibility, in our own way, within our own particular context, to do what we can to ensure that our society has the competence that prosperity and security in today's world demand.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ELEVEN DUPONT CIRCLE - SUITE 300 - WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036 - 202/833-4960

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